



Lincolnshire
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

SAFER TOGETHER

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Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London

Dear Home Office Ministers,

The growing public health concern of synthetic cannabinoid substances often known as 'Spice' within the United Kingdom

I write to you with the support of all Conservative PCCs across the country as we are of one mind that the challenges faced by synthetic cannabinoid substances are an urgent public health issue that is growing in size and demand upon public services and currently disproportionately upon policing.

I am sure that you are aware that 'Spice' and similar named compounds (for the purposes of simplicity I will use the term Spice as a cover all for the various 'brands' available) are synthetic cannabinoid products which have emerged on the drugs market within recent years. Due to their chemical composition Spice has been seen as an alternative version of cannabis by users and by interested agencies. However, the comparisons drawn with cannabis are severely limited, as the effects of Spice are certainly much worse both for the individual and society. The drugs are often referred to as "zombie drugs" due to the incapacitating and unpredictable psychoactive effects which manifest once taken; users are increasingly seen slumped on the streets in a state of semi consciousness, often passed out, sometimes aggressive and always highly unpredictable.

The substances are being increasingly linked to deaths with 27 in 2016 according to the Office for National Statistics, and this figure is likely to rise with the increasing prevalence of synthetic substance use. The wide scale abuse of these debilitating drugs within towns, cities and even villages across the UK is one of the most severe public health issue we have faced in decades and presently the response to tackle the issue is woefully inadequate. As public health and substance misuse services are not currently taking the lead in meeting this growing challenge it is falling to the police to respond to public concerns of community safety, adding yet further to policing demand without addressing the underlying issues. As raised in a debate in the House of 23rd July 2018 by Ben Bradley MP there are now instances of those hooked on Spice seeing their only way out as to take heroin as a 'softer' option as it is less debilitating and services are in place to assist with getting clean from heroin. Spice

simply put is a significant risk to our society and must be tackled effectively and with expediency.

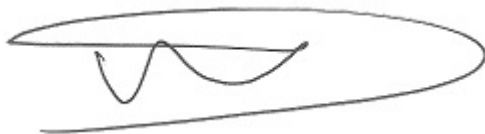
We are very supportive of Government's wish to tackle illegal substance misuse in general and to aid this would respectfully suggest the following. A specific strategy for synthetically produced drugs such as these would be very welcome to deliver an effective and consistent approach; making clear to all agencies to public health, mental health and addiction services their responsibilities to provide appropriate financial provision and support to tackle the issue. We would urge that synthetic cannabinoid products are reclassified from class B to class A. At present, the current justifications for the classification of B are rooted in the chemical similarities which Spice shares with cannabis. However, such parallels are purely chemical as the physical and psychological effects these substances have on their users are on a much more extreme scale to those of cannabis. In practice they are more comparable with class A drugs such as heroin and it is therefore imperative that it and the dealers who peddle this misery are treated with the same severity and concern. It is also vital that the level of support to those hooked on spice is placed firmly on the agenda including pathways away from criminalising the vulnerable where possible and ensuring appropriate services are in place to treat their addiction. It must be made clear to the public and young people in particular just how dangerous and serious the taking of Spice is and the current classification as B does not do that.

Our concerns not only lie with the devastating effects Spice has on its users but also the wider negative impacts felt by their families, communities and emergency services. Only last week I met with East Midlands Ambulance Services, who informed me that they are seeing an exponential rise in the number of staff members who have been assaulted by those under the influence of Spice. Additionally, the number of ambulance calls involving these psychoactive drugs has reached a worrying total of 233 in four months in Lincolnshire alone. This emphasizes the need for public health officials to address issue and take action now but this will not happen without Government direction.

We acknowledge that much is needed to fully address the problems Spice presents within our communities and it is clear that this complex issue can only be addressed collaboratively. We feel that in order for PCCs to support Government in tackling this issue that further central clarity and leadership is vital to raise this as a public health challenge. Ensuring local partners are clear what expectation is being placed on them to work in consonance with policing in order to ameliorate this problem for the good of society at large is key to that.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping oval shape with a smaller, more complex mark inside, likely representing the name Marc Jones.

Marc Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire

With the support of:

Alison Hernandez - Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall
Angus Macpherson - Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire
Anthony Stansfeld - Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley
David Lloyd - Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire
David Munro - Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey
Jason Ablewhite - Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire
John-Paul Champion - Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia
Julia Mulligan - Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire
Kathryn Holloway - Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire
Katy Bourne - Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex
Lorne Green - Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk
Matthew Ellis - Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire
Matthew Scott - Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent
Michael Lane - Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire
Peter McCall - Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria
Phillip Secombe - Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire
Roger Hirst - Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
Stephen Mold - Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire
Tim Passmore - Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk